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Editorial

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Building and nurturing a culture of tolerance, inclusivity and justice: to be sure, these are recurring themes in papers and reflections across our journal, but the papers in this issue express these aspects particularly keenly. The focus is shifting from telling narratives and reconstructing ‘the past’ to listening to, and championing, multiple voices and stories. It is about thinking outside the trench, so to speak, and bringing popular wisdom and different abilities into the matrix.

Overcoming difference, fighting prejudice against those differently able and instead celebrating the Enabled contribution to the process of archaeology and heritage: these are topics that our authors skilfully and compassionately raise in the pages of this issue. Andrea R. Roberts (Texas A&M University, USA) foregrounds the tremendous journey of the community of Shankleville, Texas, from exclusion to activism. This paper frames ‘counterpublics’ enrichment through archaeological knowledge and its use in dismantling racism and exclusion narratives towards African Americans. In the evocative article from Janne Ikäheimo and Tina Äikäs (University of Oulu, Finland), community-centred oral history and participation in ‘an open’ heritage project serve to explore the dark and still emotionally-charged past of a mundane urban locale in Oulu, northern Finland.

Identities, then, form a further thread across the Issue. Education and empowerment through engagement is another strength. In the article by Eldris Con Aguilar, Emma Slayton and Corinne L. Hofman (Leiden University, the Netherlands), the seascapes of the Caribbean nation of the Dominican Republic offer a new tool for teachers to teach movement of pre-contact Amerindian peoples.

Workshops with educators on seafaring technology widened the pedagogical horizon but also enriched the curriculum with new imaginative and poignant ways of understanding the past. Another powerful thread across the Issue is the celebration of different and complementary abilities. The contribution from David Farrell-Banks (Newcastle University, UK) successfully argues for the therapeutic and emotional advantages of involving individuals living with Autism Spectrum disorders in archaeological projects. He then provides a useful how-to practical guide to empowering these persons through fieldwork which we are sure will become the go-to guide to this inclusive and commendable practice.

The wonderful Reflection papers by Erik De’Scathebury and Theresa O’Mahony (The Enabled Archaeology Foundation, UK) serve to shed light on the difficult journey for recognition and often unfair back story of dis/Abled and Enabled archaeology and heritage professionals in a field which still discriminates the differently able. These bravely and wittily articulated pieces, with an opening forum discussion and then two individual Reflections from De’Scathebury and O’Mahony, represent an important contribution to our journal and set a precedent for a culture where all abilities and differences enrich, not divide, the field.

The final entry for this Issue is an event review from Linda Shetabi, who attended and participated in the Third International Conference on Best Practices in World Heritage: Integral Actions, which took place in May 2019 in Mahon, Menorca, Spain. The event, featuring an impressive array of leading cultural heritage specialists from across the world, had as a central tenet, the importance of greater inclusion of different communities and individuals into heritage management processes.

In short, authors and reviewers in this Issue identify the need to build supportive networks that create and foster new ways of engaging with the past- be it through excavations that are open to individuals on the Autism Spectrum, to unearthing marginalized Black voices, to building up sense of place around a site of violence. We hope, and are confident in this regard, that these wonderful themes persist and grow in our journal and in our archaeology and heritage-facing disciplines and practices as a whole.